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Walter Scott's **personality parade**

Q. It disturbs me to read that it took the FBI 18 years to track down Joseph George Helmich, a former U.S. Army sergeant who allegedly sold top-secret code keys to the Russians. What's the explanation, if any?—Bob Garrity, South St. Paul, Minn.

A. Espionage cases are notoriously difficult to break. Helmich, who was a warrant officer with the U.S. Army in Paris, allegedly sold the Soviets technical details concerning our KL-7 cryptographic system in 1964. He resigned from the Army in 1966. He was caught earlier this year, reportedly when the FBI trailed a Soviet diplomat who was making a deferred payment to Helmich. The FBI generally trails important Soviet Embassy employees in this country, just as the Soviets shadow important American Embassy employees in Moscow.